

## Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 095063

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 4739 ACTION SECSTATE CAIRO  
JERUSALEM WHITE HOUSE APR 10

QUOTE S E C R E T TEL AVIV 4739

EXDIS DIST AS NODIS

FOR ATHERTON AND SAUNDERS FROM LEWIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PEPR, XF, IS, US, EG  
SUBJECT: RESPONDING TO ISRAELI PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

REF: A) STATE 081926, B) CAIRO 09825

1. THIS IS A TRICKY PROBLEM. THE ISRAELIS NOW REALIZE  
THAT WE ARE ON THE VERGE OF "GOING FOR BROKE," ARE  
SEEING THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF OUR PUBLIC INFORMATION  
EFFORTS ON THIER STANDING WITH THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, AND  
ARE INCREASINGLY BITTER ABOUT WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO BE  
"HIGHLY UNFAIR AND UNWISE U.S. TACTICS." EMANATING FROM  
SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 095063

THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. THEIR PRE-  
DICTABLE RESPONSE WILL BE THE KNEE TO THE GROIN.

2. FROM BEGIN DOWN, NEARLY ALL THE ISRAELI LEADERS  
BELIEVE PRESIDENT CARTER TREATED BEGIN IN A DELIBERATELY  
PROVOCATIVE, UNJUST FASHION AT THE END OF HIS WASHINGTON  
VISIT BY CHARACTERIZING BEGIN'S POSITIONS AS TOTALLY  
NEGATIVE AT THE SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEE BRIEFINGS.  
EVERY NEGATIVE WORD SUBSEQUENTLY APPEARING IN THE U.S.  
PRESS AND IN THE REPORTS FROM ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS IN

WASHINGTON IS SEEN HERE AS THE RESULT OF A DELIBERATE OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN "TO BLACKEN BEGIN AND CUT HIM DOWN TO SIZE." EVEN THOSE MANY LIKE YADIN WHO DISAGREE WITH BEGIN ABOUT SETTLEMENTS OR 242 RESENT IT DEEPLY. AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE DEGREE TO PARANOIA, EVEN ROY ATHERTON'S CAREFULLY CRAFTED AND BALANCED SPEECH IN ATLANTA ON U.S. MIDDLE EAST POLICY AROUSED SCREAMS OF "FOUL" HERE FROM PEOPLE WHO SHOULD KNOW BETTER. IN OTHER WORDS, CONTRARY TO HERMANN EILTS' PERCEPTION (REF B, PARA ONE), THE ISRAELIS SEE US AS HAVING ALREADY "GONE PUBLIC" -- WITH A VENGEANCE.

3. IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, IT IS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT THE GOI IS GIVING GREATER EMPHASIS TO ITS INFORMATION EFFORTS HERE AND IN THE U.S. ISRAELI GOVERNMENT SOURCES, MOSTLY WE BELIEVE IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE RECENT PRESS STORIES WHICH DAILY DISTORT USG POSITIONS. WE SEE THESE EFFORTS AS LARGELY DEFENSIVE AND NOT VERY WELL ORCHESTRATED. ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC AND PRESS OPINION HERE WHICH COMES TO THE FORE AT SUCH MOMENTS OF U.S.-ISRAELI TENSION IS A HIGH DEGREE OF IRRATIONALITY ON SECURITY ISSUES. AS EXTERNAL PRESSURE OR CRITICISM CONVERGES ON ISRAEL, AN IRRATIONAL REACTION SETS IN WHICH DISCOURAGES  
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PAGE 03 STATE 095063

CAREFUL ANALYSIS OR DEBATE. THE TYPICAL REACTION HERE HAS BEEN THE RECURRING CALL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A MINISTRY OF INFORMATION OR AT LEAST FOR EXPANDED OVERSEAS INFORMATION PROGRAMS. AND THE GOI HAS ANNOUNCED THAT MFA DEPUTY SPOKESMAN BENNY AVILEAH HAS BEEN ASSIGNED TO NEW YORK TO COORDINATE ISRAELI INFORMATION EFFORTS.

4. IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO CITE SOME OF THE STATEMENTS OR ALLEGATIONS WHICH HAVE APPEARED--WHATEVER THE SOURCE --IN RECENT ISRAELI MEDIA REPORTS AND COMMENTARIES. SOME OF THESE HAVE ALREADY BEEN REBUTTED, BUT THEY ARE ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE THINGS WHICH, IN VARIOUS WAYS, WE AND WASHINGTON SHOULD CONTINUE TO REFUTE (HOW WE SHOULD REFUTE THEM WILL BE DISCUSSED LATER IN THIS MESSAGE):

- A. THAT THE U.S. HAS CHANGED (HARDENED) ITS POSITION ON THE BEGIN PEACE PLAN;
- B. THAT THE U.S. IS SIDING WITH EGYPT ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE DISCUSSIONS AND IS NO LONGER PLAYING THE ROLE OF OBJECTIVE MEDIATOR;
- C. THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION CONTAINS NO INFLUENTIAL VOICE REALLY SYMPATHETIC TO ISRAELI PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS;
- D. THAT THE ADMINISTRATION INSISTS THAT ISRAEL MUST GIVE UP ALL THE OCCUPIED TERRITORY, EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR "MINISCULE MODIFICATIONS" (MARCH 31 MAARIV);
- E. THAT THE U.S. REALLY FAVORS A PALESTINIAN STATE ("HOMELAND" AND "STATE" ARE SOMETIMES USED INTERCHANGABLY);
- F. THAT THE U.S. ALSO DISAGREES WITH THE ARAB INTER-

PRETATION OF RESOLUTION 242--I.E., TOTAL WITHDRAWAL;  
BUT DOES NOTHING TO MAKE THAT DIFFERENCE CLEAR IN PUBLIC.  
G. THAT THE U.S. WANTS ALL EXISTING SETTLEMENTS REMOVED,  
AS WELL AS NO NEW ONES ESTABLISHED;  
H. THAT THE U.S. HAS BROKEN ITS COMMITMENTS TO ISRAEL  
ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE (OFFERING ONLY HALF THE F-15S  
REQUESTED AND PLACING NEW AIRCRAFT FOR ISRAEL INTO A  
PACKAGE WITH PLANES FOR EGYPT AND SAUDIA ARABIA);  
I. THAT PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S TREATMENT IN WASHINGTON  
SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 095063

WAS "DEGRADING" (MARCUS IN HAARETZ, MARCH 31); AND  
J. THAT THE U.S. IS "PRESSURING" ISRAEL.

5. ISRAEL-BASED RESPONSE: TRUST IT IS UNNECESSARY  
TO SAY THAT I AND ALL OF OUR STAFF MEET SUCH MISSTATE-  
MENTS HEAD-ON IN THE MANY PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WE HOLD  
WITH ISRAELI LEADERS AND JOURNALISTS. OCCASIONALLY WE  
HAVE SOME IMPACT. WE ARE TRYING, HOWEVER, TO AVOID  
BECOMING PUBLIC ANTAGONISTS TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR REASONS  
TOO OBVIOUS TO SPELL OUT. WITH THAT CAVEAT, WE WILL  
CONTINUE TO ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE RECORD AS STRAIGHT AS  
POSSIBLE AND TO SEE THAT U.S. STATEMENTS AND VIEWS ARE  
UNDERSTOOD BY OFFICIALS AND PRESS ALIKE, THROUGH OUR  
FREQUENT CONTACTS WITH BOTH. AS IT HAPPENED, I WAS

BRIEFING THE AMERICAN PRESS HERE ABOUT THE SAME TIME  
ROY ATHERTON WAS GIVING HIS BACKGROUNDER FOR ISRAELI  
CORRESPONDENTS MARCH 30. WE WERE MAKING MANY OF  
THE SAME POINTS. THE EVENING BEFORE, I HAD BRIEFED THE  
ISRAELI PRESS, BOTH SESSIONS ON "DEEP BACKGROUND," FOR  
NO ATTRIBUTION TO ANY SOURCE. MY DCM, PAO, INFORMATION  
OFFICER AND POLITICAL OFFICERS ARE ALSO IN TOUCH WITH THE  
PRESS FREQUENTLY, AND THE PAO OR IO CALLS INDIVIDUAL  
JOURNALISTS TO TRY TO CORRECT THE RECORD IF THIS APPEARS  
TO BE DESIRABLE. NEEDLESS TO SAY, WE MAKE SURE THAT  
ALL KEY OFFICIAL TEXTS ARE IN THE HANDS OF JOURNALISTS  
AND OFFICIALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

6. WASHINGTON- BASED RESPONSE: WHILE THE LEVEL  
AND VARIETY OF USG EFFORTS SHOULD PROBABLY REMAIN ABOUT  
THE SAME, BOTH IN ISRAEL AND IN WASHINGTON, YOU SHOULD  
KEEP IN MIND THAT REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON-BASED ISRAELI  
MEDIA CORRESPONDENTS ARE OFTEN CONSIDERED MORE AUTHORI-  
SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 095063

TATIVE THAN THE WRITINGS OF THEIR COLLEAGUES HERE. THUS  
THE MOST EFFECTIVE PLACE TO COUNTER OR PREVENT DISTORTION  
OF U.S. POLICY POSITIONS TOWARDS ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE  
EAST WILL OFTEN BE WASHINGTON RATHER THAN TEL AVIV OR

JERUSALEM. FREQUENT CONTACT WITH ISRAELI MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES IN THE U.S. WILL CERTAINLY NOT CAUSE DISTORTIONS TO DISAPPEAR WHERE SUCH EMOTIONAL ISSUES ARE INVOLVED, BUT THE DAMAGE CAN PROBABLY BE SOMEWHAT REDUCED.

7. WE ARE FULL OF ADMIRATION FOR THE PATIENT EFFORTS OF HODDING CARTER AND HIS STAFF, AND OF NEA, TO BE AS RESPONSIVE AS POSSIBLE TO THE ISRAELI PRESS IN WASHINGTON. THE MARCH 31 SPECIAL BACKGROUNDER BY ROY ATHERTON WAS HIGHLY USEFUL AND QUITE ACCURATELY REPORTED HERE. IT COULD BE DONE FAIRLY REGULARLY, THOUGH OF COURSE, WE WANT TO AVOID, AS ROY NOTED, ANY IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE TRYING TO INTERFERE OR INFLUENCE INTERNAL POLITICAL EVENTS IN ISRAEL. WE WONDER IF THE SAME EFFORT IS MADE IN WASHINGTON THAT IS MADE HERE TO PROVIDE ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS WITH OFFICIAL TEXTS RECEIVED HERE IN THE WIRELESS FILE, INCLUDING THE U.S. PRESS OPINION SUMMARY WHICH IS MUCH APPRECIATED BY LOCAL JOURNALISTS (WHETHER THEY AGREE WITH THE EDITORIALS OR NOT). EITHER STATE OR ICA SHOULD SEE THAT APPROPRIATE MATERIAL OF THIS SORT IS PROMPTLY GIVEN TO ISRAELI JOURNALISTS IN WASHINGTON. OUR RESPECTIVE EFFORTS COULD BE FURTHER ENHANCED BY EVEN CLOSER COMMUNICATION CONCERNING NOON BRIEFINGS AND OTHER RELEVANT PRESS EVENTS TAKING PLACE IN THE U.S. ON ESPECIALLY TROUBLESOME AND DELICATE ISSUES, IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL IF NEA WOULD PHONE THE PAO HERE FOR OUR SUGGESTIONS WHILE THE GUIDANCE FOR THE NOON BRIEFING IS BEING PREPARED. WHEN A PARTICULAR NOON BRIEFER HAS RUN INTO PROBLEMS WHICH COULD CAUSE NASTY HEADLINES IN ISRAEL, WE WOULD LIKE TO BE ALERTED TO THE DIFFICULTY AND TO DISCUSS HOW BEST TO HANDLE THE PROBLEM, IN WASHINGTON AND HERE. TWICE IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS  
SECRET

PAGE 06 STATE 095063

PHONE CALLS FROM HERE HAVE LED TO USEFUL FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE NOON BRIEFING. IN BOTH INSTANCES, THE CLARIFICATION WAS PICKED UP BY AT LEAST SOME OF THE ISRAELI PRESS. FINALLY, WE NEED TO KNOW IN ADVANCE OF ANY SPECIAL BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS, SUCH AS ATHERTON'S, AND OF RELEVANT PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY U.S. OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY WHEN THERE NORMALLY IS NO WIRELESS FILE. TRANSCRIPTS, AT LEAST OF MIDDLE EAST PORTIONS, SHOULD BE TRANSMITTED TO US BY THE FASTEST POSSIBLE MEANS, NOT ONLY FOR DISTRIBUTION BUT SO THAT WE CAN BE PROPERLY ARMED FOR MY FREQUENT MEETINGS WITH ISRAELI LEADERS (OFTEN ON SATURDAY EVENINGS AND SUNDAYS).

8. A FINAL CAVEAT. WE ARE THE BIG POWER; THE ISRAELIS FEEL THE STAKES ARE THEIR SURVIVAL, NOT OURS. WE NEED TO LEAN OVER BACKWARDS NOT TO TAKE CHEAP SHOTS PUBLICLY IF WE WANT TO EDGE THEM ALONG TOWARD THE FRIGHTENING

(FOR THEM) DECISIONS ONLY THEY CAN TAKE. THERE WILL BE UNAVOIDABLE SHRILLNESS AND MISREPRESENTATION IN THE PUBLIC ARENA HERE, AND NO CAMPAIGN "TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT" WILL PREVENT IT. LET'S KEEP OUR COOL AND KEEP OUR EYE ON THE OBJECTIVE--WHICH IS TO ASSURE THAT THE ISRAELI RETAIN ENOUGH FAITH IN OUR SUPPORT FOR THEIR SECURITY THAT THEY WILL TAKE WHAT TO MANY PEOPLE HERE ARE NEARLY UNACCEPTABLE RISKS, EVEN FOR PEACE. LEWIS UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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